The Sacramento Observer

Weekly Political Section

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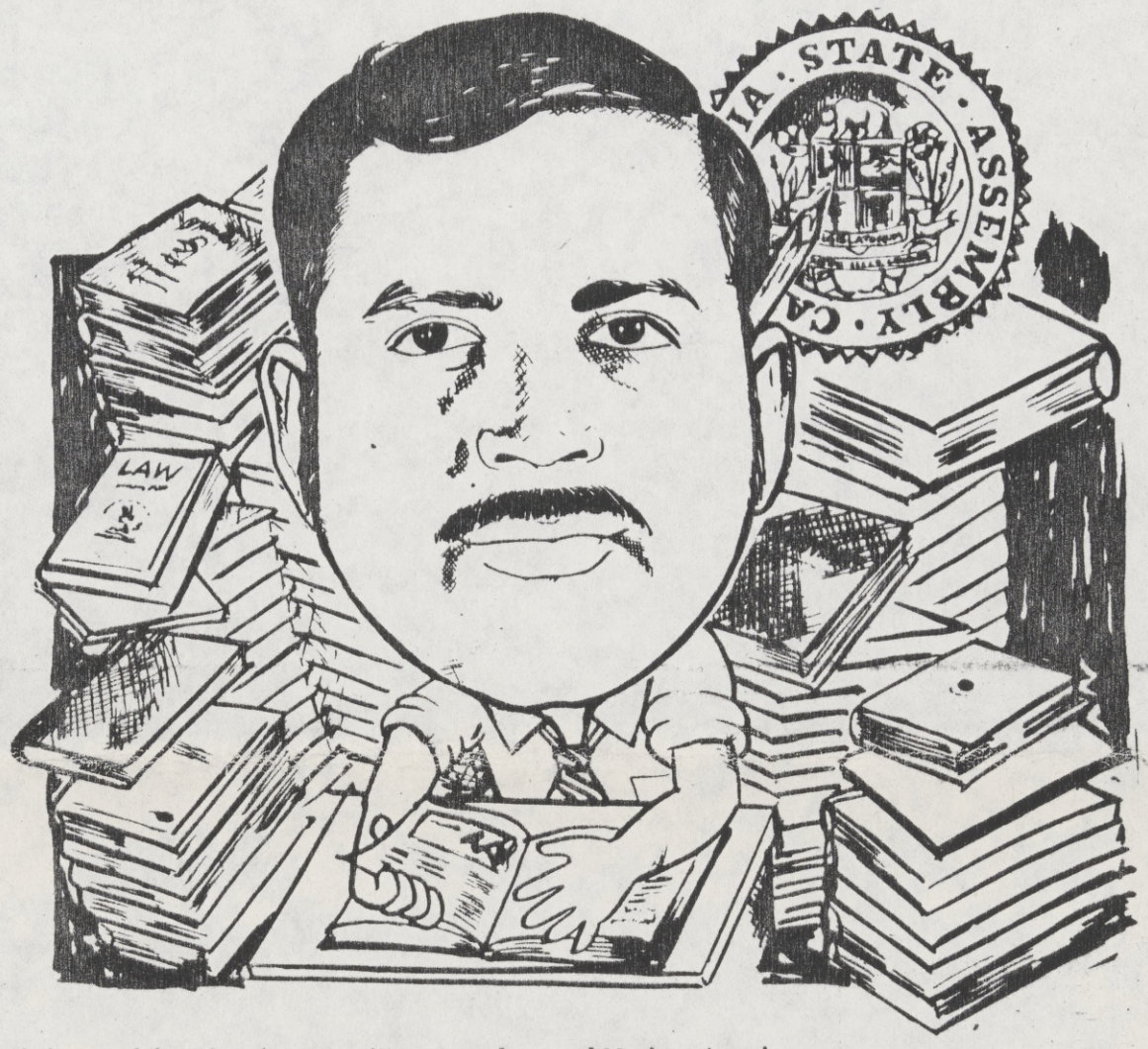
CAPITOL VIEW

Gonzales Heads Education Committee

by SELMA SPARKS
Political Editor



Education Committee Chairman, Ray Gonzales, Democrat from Bakersfield, is not new to minority struggles. The first Chicano to chair such a powerful committee was chairman of the Kern Council for Civil Unity (KCCU), an inter racial civil rights group originating back in the Rumford act days. The group was organized to fight for open housing issues.

At the same time, Gonzales was president of the Martin Luther King Memorial Committee, another civil rights organization. A very close friend of Gonzales', Charles Siplin, a Black, was vice-president, then the two friends switched roles. Together they created a coalition of groups to form an unbrella group which took on the broadcasting industry in 1971.

The group, with Gonzales as vice president, challenged the license renewal of eight radio stations and three channels.

In this action they won what Gonzales called "one of the biggest victories with the media in the nation." Siplin became national president of the McGraw Hill Minority Advisory Board, and Gonzales is a member of the national board for La Raza. La Raza is a ten program series now being developed. McGraw Hill purchased three TV stations after being successfully challenged by the civil rights group.

As a result of their action, the group signed contracts with the radio and TV stations which changed the hiring policies to include minorities.

As a result of the media exposure Gonzales received while functioning with KCCU and as host of a radio-TV show. Reflections, produced by his friend Siplin, Gonzales decided to run against the incumbent from his area for his present seat in the Assembly.

At the time he decided to run for office, Gonzales was also students rights chairman for the American Liberties Union at Bakersfield. "I was kind of active for a few years before I decided to run" commented Gonzales.

The Assemblyman's original district had approximately 11% minorities. His present district, after reapportionment, consists of about 18% Chicano, 7% Black and " ...the rest Anglo except for a few Philippinos."

As chairman of the Education Committee, Gonzales sees as the most important issue to be handled by that committee, compliance with the Serrano - Priest decision of the California Supreme Court stating that the States manner of financing education is unconstitutional. "The next session of the Education Committee will be the most important ever as we attempt to develop a new system," explained Gonzales. He continued by explaining that it is a question of whether they go to personal income tax or shift to a statewide property tax as they try to develop revenues for education.

According to Wilson Riles, in his first cost estimate, it may cost close to $1 billion in added revenue for the schools, and the Education Committee has to determine how to come up with this amount in a fashion other than the present one used because the court says the present method violates equal protection under the law.

The children in one district get short changed educationally as a result of something beyond their control, a low tax base in their area. Children in a high tax base area get a better education by accident of residence. The new chairman gave as an example his own district, the McKitrick school district, where they have an accessed evaluation of approximately $1 million per student.

Gonzales pointed out that his district is used as an example of an extreme and that this high ranges down to an assessed valuation of property in other parts of the state of $200 per student.

Gonzales then referred to the state's commitment to develop bilingual education programs which are going to serve as a model for the entire south-west anywhere there is a large Spanish speaking population. He then pointed out that a bill being introduced by Senator Mervyn Dymally, will, if passed, authorize schools to emphasize the history of European Americans as well as Black Americans, Asian Americans and Mexican Americans.

"We're beginning to see that European Americans such as Italians, Greeks, Polish and others, are beginning to have an appreciation for their culture too," Gonzales advised. He pointed out that, for a long time, "They could lose themselves in the so-called melting pot whereas the Black and Mexican Americans could not. Then Blacks led the movement in terms of cultural self-awareness and the Chicano movement is going strong now and you're beginning to see bumper stickers saying, 'Italian is Beautiful'."

Gonzales is hoping that, under a new Governor, early childhood education will forge ahead. "I would venture to say that either of the candidates, Jerry Brown or Hugh Flournoy will be more accepting of these things. Both of them come with a background in education."

In explaining how the lack of early childhood programs affects minorities adversely, Gonzales pointed out that in many cases these children come from homes where the parents have only a rudimentary knowledge of the use of the language or else they come from monolingual homes, fluent in another language. Both parents usually work hard, come home at night too tired to help their children develop reading and language skills. With the large families these people usually have, it is impossible for them to provide the necessary training at home.

These are the children, according to Gonzales, who start the first day of school already handicapped and they never catch up. "Early childhood education has many dividends," continued Gonzales. "Not only preparing the child to compete with other children but it allows a mother to go to work rather than staying home on welfare."

Continuing along these lines, the Assemblyman pointed out the fact that children do not start learing at five

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LOAN SHARKS

The High Cost Of Money

Loan sharks will increase their take if Assemblyman Briggs' bill, number 3729 becomes law.

Under existing law, a "personal property broker" may charge interest at a flat 1-1/2% per month on the unpaid principal balance or at varying rates of interest estimated against increasing amounts of the loan.

An example of what this means, 2-1/2% per month interest may now be charged on the unpaid principal balance up to $200, 2% on that portion of the unpaid principal balance in excess of $200 and up to $500. One and one half percent per month may be charged between $500 and $1,500. Any excess over $1,500 is at the rate of 1% per month.

The bill, which will go before the Assembly this month, would adjust the 2-1/2% per month from $200 to $350; the 2% rate from $500 to $800 and the 1-1/2% rate from $1,500 to $2,000. Amounts over $2,000 would reamin at 1% per month.

Under the proposed bill, a $500 two year loan would have an annual percentage rate of 29.66% per annum, while under existing law the rate is 27.88%.

To put it more clearly, as the law stands, if your unpaid principal balance is $800, your interest rate is 1-1/2%; under the proposed bill your interest would be 2%.

The bill is sponsored by the California Loan and Finance Association with lobbyists for all the loan companies having worked very hard for it's passage.

Assemblyman Briggs, a member of the Assembly Committee on Finance and Insurance, where the bill was introduced, was not available for comment.

We did, however, speak to Assemblyman Leon Ralph, also a member of the committee about his reaction to the bill.

"When it comes before the Assembly I will vote 'No'," Ralph said.

Ralph went on to explain that, as he saw it, this bill would adversely affect mostly the poor and minorities. "Because I know, from my own past personal experience when I was working my way through law school and had to use one of those companies, how such a bill would affect young students, I must speak strongly against it," Ralph advised.

The bill will be heard on the Assembly floor this week. If the will of the public has been heard perhaps it will not gain passage. If it passes in the Assembly, the people must let their Senators know that this is a bill they want killed in the Senate. We will advise our readers of the progress of this bill which could affect so many lives.

State Bond Act Provides Funds

Legislation co-authored by Assemblyman Julian C. Dixon (D-Los Angeles) the Assembly Democratic Caucus Chairman, would provide an additional $20,000,000 for parks in Los Angeles County. One of the proposed parks is in Baldwin Hills which is part of Dixon's district.

The funds for these parks would come from the $250,000,000 State Bond Act approved by the voters in June of this year. This act would provide $90,000,000 to counties for local needs while the remaining $160,000,000 is to be allocated by the State Parks and Recreation Commission. Under the commission's proposal Los Angeles County would receive $20,000,000 or 12.5% of the funds available.

"I find the commission's proposal discriminatory; Los Angeles County has 36% of the state's population yet the commission has allocated only $20,000,000 or 12.5% of the $160,000,000 approved by the voters," Dixon said. "The most serious charge against the proposals is that the state ignores the areas of greatest demonstrated needs."

The Caucus Chairman explained that AB 4517 authored by Majority Floor Leader, Howard Berman, (D-Sherman Oaks), and co-authored by Dixon and Assemblyman Leon Ralph, (D-Compton), would provide an additional $20,000,000 for five projects in Los Angeles County, thus increasing the percentage proportion from 12.5% to approximately 25%. The legislation provides $4,000,000 each for five project needs in Los Angeles County, namely, Santa Fe Dam, Baldwin Hills, Pan Pacific (Puertco (Little Dume) and Castaic.

"I am particularly excited by the Baldwin Hills approval. This area of Los Angeles has long been in need of such a park," Dixon said. Within the existing undeveloped portion of the Baldwin Hills there exists the opportunity to acquire at least 500 acres of land to be developed as a significant recreational facility for the residents of this area. The size and location of

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Reagan Vetoes Funds For Low Incomes Homes

Gov. Ronald Reagan has vetoed a bill aimed at providing funds to build and renovate badly needed low and moderate-income homes.

The bill also would have allowed California voters to decide if they wanted to back a $500 million bond issuance to finance the venture.

Standing firm on his belief that the state has no business providing housing assistance, Reagan apparently ignored his own Department of Housing and Community Affairs' report which supported state involvement in housing finance.

Sen. George Zenovich, D-Fresno, author of the bill, said he was informed by Reagan that the bill would be vetoed. Zenovich advised that the Governor's position was that such a bill would harm the state's credit.

However, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs indicates housing finance could be established by the State of California without impairing its bonding capacity.

Zenovich said he had the support of the legislature before sending the bill to the Governor for signing. The Senator says he will be working this week to override Reagan's veto.

The proposal, as submitted by Zenovich, would set up a state housing corporation which would provide through regular banks and loan companies, low-interest loans which could be used to renovate old houses which are deteriorating because of age.

New homes also could be built to replace those abandoned and demolished. As a result, people could remain in their established neighborhoods without having to flee to the suburbs as the neighborhood declines which has been the traditional pattern.

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years, they start learning much earlier. As he pointed out, "It's a great myth, the attitude that parents should take care of their children until a specified age because otherwise they are turning the child over to the state and this smacks of communism." Gonzales used the rationale that if this were the case, what changes it when the child becomes five and we turn them over to schools?

Gonzales continued saying that, though many people still resist the idea, two or three is the ideal age for a child to start learning language skills and reading skills. "As a teacher, I started teaching my little one to count at that age and we read books also," Gonzales advised.

On the question of whether people would agree to pay for this early childhood education out of their pockets, Gonzales referred back to the welfare "bugaboo" as he called it, by citing the fact that the word itself is positive. "The welfare of the nation, welfare of the people, welfare of the nation, but the Reagan administration has made it a negative word."

Gonzales pointed out that the "experts" pick 2% of welfare frauds and paint everybody in that light and they isolate one bad situation and " . . . they have made a negative word out of something positive."

Gonzales believes that early childhood programs and day care centers can be justifed by proving to the tax conscious middle class that, in the long run, they save money by providing these services. These services will free mothers who want to go to work making it profitable for them to work.

In answer to questions about his proposed staff, the new chairman advised that he is going to retain one of the consultants, already in the building since he is an expert in school finance. He also plans to have a community college person come in to serve as head consultant. Gonzales is also trying to lure Dr. Wanda Baker, a Black, onto his staff. Dr. Baker is from the Office of Research and is now on loan to Julian Dixon's Select Committee On Juvenile Violence.

"If I can lure her into my staff, we will have two doctors, her and me," Gonzales received his doctorate at the State University.

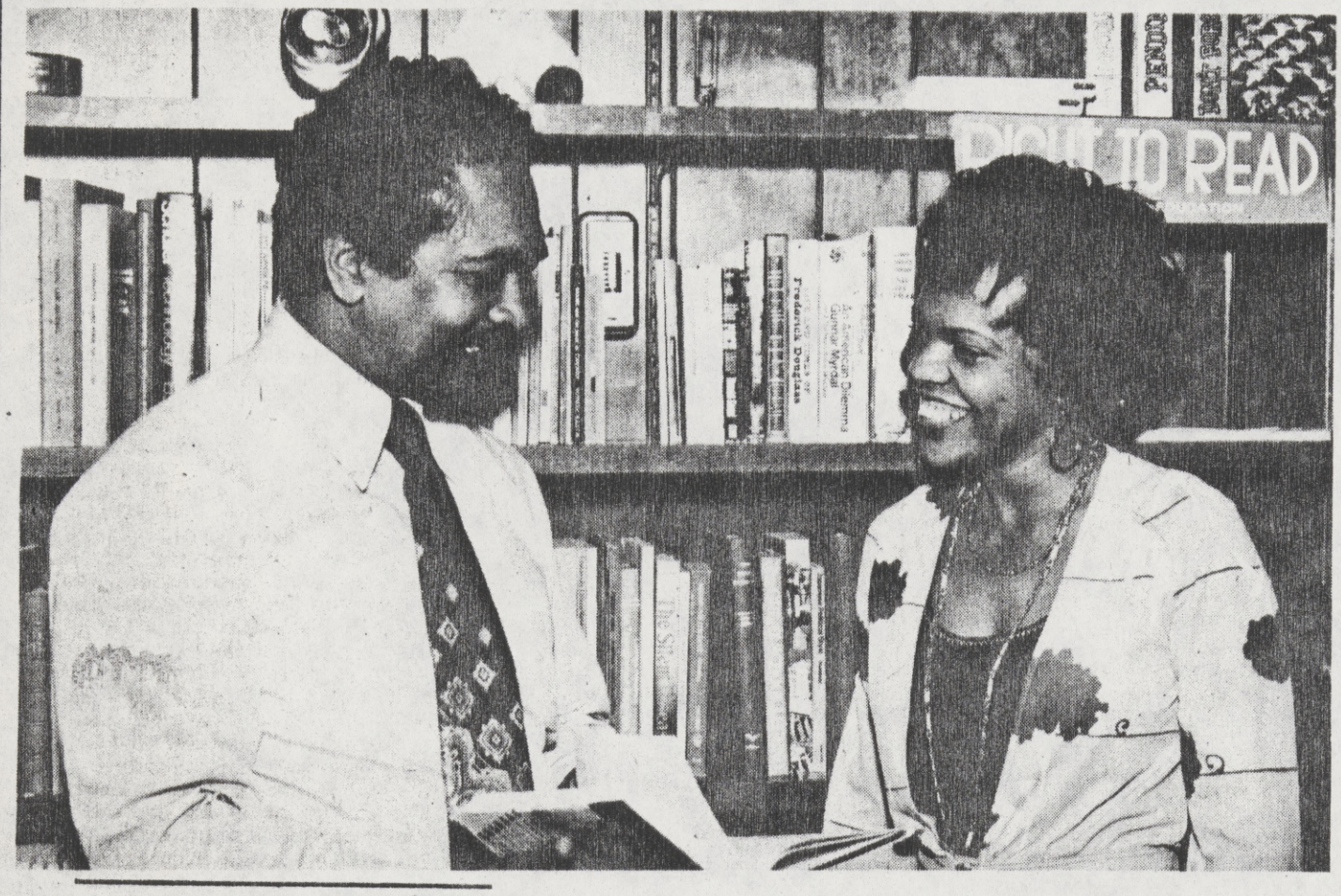
Continuing with information concerning changes in the Education Committee, Gonzales advised that they all be attempting to do away with select committees and institute standing sub-committees. "The Speaker feels we will have better control and better work if we develop standing sub-committees for the major policy committees. We want to develop programs, not just sit back and scrutinize legislation." Gonzales expressed his major criticism of the old committee as it's lack of creativity. "The former chairman was good at details. He was good at cleaning up legislation and very astute in seeing that the language was just right."

Gonzales hopes to bring to the committee the creativity he feels it lacked under the former leadership.

John Vasconcellos will chair a sub-committee on higher education and Leroy Greene, past chairman of the committee, will serve as chairman of a sub-committee on school finance. A sub-committee on school curriculum will be developed and probably chaired by a Republican as a gesture of bi-partisanship.

"Our committee is pretty bi-partisan. Rarely do we have Democratic-Republican issues," commented Gonzales, as he closed by noting that education is everybody's concern.

The new Education Committee chairman is looking forward to a year of hard and "hopefully rewarding" work within the committee.



Rebecca Elaine Mayes holds one of the top positions on Senator Mervyn Dymally's satff. She is his Administrative Assistant and the only Black woman holding such a position within the Capitol.

Ms. Mayes, originally from Atlanta, Ga., graduated from Fisk University in Tenn. She also holds a Masters degree in urban studies from Occidental College in L.A. She has also studied at Atlanta University in Georgia, Howard University, Wash., D.C., and Lincoln University, School of Law.

Ms. Mayes responsibilities are many and varied. They include drafting legislation, coordinating conferences, writing research reports, handling constituent problems and representing the Senator in his absence.

From all that could be heard from Dymally and those who work around this charming and personable young woman, she performs excellently in all of her duties. We can personally speak for her magnificent ability in dealing with people. Her ready smile and quick wit are always a welcome addition to an otherwise totally grim day.

Of politics, Ms. Mayes has this to say: "I have found that one should try to perserve an open mind in all debateable issues. Discuss, but not argue; disagree, if necessary, yet be friendly." Ms. Mayes lives what she speaks.

Faces Behind Capitol Desks

Raquel Giangiobbe, appointment secretary for Senator Mervyn Dymally, is pleasantly and personably efficient. Always ready and willing to be of assistance in any way possible, she adds a whole new dimension to appointment making.

As appointment secretary to the Senator, she not only schedules his appointments but follows through to see that they are kept. She is also bilingual secretary, (Spanish), and takes care of translation of letters and news releases.

It is better to permit Mrs. Giangiobbe to speak for herself about her job. "There is never a dull moment in this office. The work is exciting and fruitful. I feel very fortunate to work for the future Lt. Governor of this state. I would not have come to work for Senator Dymally if I did not believe in him and the work he has done for my people as well as other minority groups."

This secretary believes in what she's doing and who she's doing it for.

Mrs. Leonne J. Shymoniak, Senator Dymally's secretary, worked in several other countries prior to settling in California where she has worked as the Senator's secretary since 1973.

"I consider myself to be most fortunate and have found this position to be the most exciting and fast moving I have ever held," is how Mrs. Shymoniak puts it.

As Dymally's secretary, Mrs. Shymoniak puts in a busy day each day. The Senator's avowed "open door" policy is for real and, according to his secretary, she meets the most interesting people all day every day. She was told about this "open door" policy when she first came onto the staff and she now can speak for it herself.

This pleasant young lady has found working for the Senator a wonderful personal experience. She has been encouraged by her boss to continue her college studies towards a B.A. degree in Government.

"The Senator has been responsible for many needy pieces of legislation in social reform, legal equality, etc. I believe that upon his election to the office of Lieutenant Governor this November, the people of California will benefit still more in many ways." This is what Mrs. Shymoniak feels about her boss. She joins the rest of the staff in her great admiration and loyalty to Dymally.

Young, charming, efficient and talented young woman with a pleasurable sense of humor, that's Ruby Anderson, Committee Secretary to the Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth, of which Dymally is chairman.

In her duties as secretary, Ms. Anderson coordinates the committee hearings, she gathers the people to testify at the various hearings. This entails a great deal of traveling for her.

Prior to her appointment to her present position, Ms. Anderson was Dymally's secretary, the position Mrs. Shymoniak now holds. Ms. Anderson has been in her new position, which entails more traveling and dealing with a varied multitude of people, since last September.

In addition to her committee duties this multi-talented young woman also serves as general staff person to several of Dymally's committees. She is always busy and appears to enjoy every busy moment of it.

"Working for the Legislature has been an education in life and government that isn't offered in any school. I would certainly recommend the experience to anyone who has the opportunity." So says our young committee secretary who, along with her committee duties, handles much of the Senator's personal business and appears to enjoy her extremely busy and active schedule.

Ella Hall Blevins is Senator Dymally's Legislative Secretary. As are his other staff members, Ms. Blevins is charming with a sense of humor that makes any day just a bit brighter.

One of her many duties is tied to the phone and answering calls from many different types of people, not all of them pleasant. We had the opportunity to listen in on her dealing with one not so pleasant call and were much impressed. She was patient, courteous, pleasant and never responded to the difficult time she was obviously getting from the other end of the line. We must say, she handled herself beautifully.

Ms. Blevins, in her position, maintains files, sets up bills in committees, handles the amending of bills and sometimes presents the bills in committee. She also handles prison correspondence with the Adult Authority, Department of Corrections and inmates and families of inmates. She handles all correspondence related to legislation. Added to this, she maintains an up-to-date office mailing list of all groups and organizations related to public services.

It is obvious from the fervor with which she performs her duties, Ms. Blevins enjoys her work and joins with the rest of Dymally's staff in her respect and admiration for her immediate boss.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Proposed Amendment On Nov. Ballot

Assemblyman Julian Dixon (D-L.A.), introduced a bill (AB 128) to return to those persons convicted of a felony, who have paid their debt and are no longer on parole, the right to vote. The bill continued the denial of this right to those still on parole and those adjudged mentally incompetent.

This bill successfully cleared both the Assembly and the Senate. The Governor vetoed the bill.

Scheduled to appear on the November ballot is Proposition 10, an Assembly constitutional amendment No. 38 which will require the Legislature to pass laws denying the right to vote to persons when they are in prison or on parole for the commission of a felony. It states that the right of convicted felons to vote would be automatically restored when their prison sentences, including parole time, have been completed.

It is necessary to have a legislative bill plus the constitutional amendment passed into law because the rulings are in the statutes as well as in the Constitution. If the proposition is voted in and the constitution amended, the Assembly bill will be reintroduced and will pass into law with no problem.

As of now, the California Constitution requires the Legislature to pass laws preventing persons convicted of specified crimes from voting. The Constitution does not allow the Legislature to restore voting rights to such persons when their prison terms are completed. The loss of their right to vote is life long unless restored by pardon.

As it now stands, the law regulating the right to vote is not uniformly applied. In the more liberal counties, of which Sacramento is one, the convicted felons right to vote is entirely dependent upon the county clerk in office. In most of these liberal counties, the question about conviction is not even asked. However, should the county clerk change his position or be replaced by a less liberal officer, the manner in which the law is presently interpreted could well change without notice. Those freed felons who are now voting with no problem, who are not even known as former felons, would have their voting rights revoked forthwith.

In those less liberal counties, any convicted felon must file an application to regain his voting rights once he is released from prison and parole. The proposed constitutional amendment would restore this right automatically without so much red tape. The amendment would apply the new law uniformly and not leave it to the discretion of one individual county clerk.

When asking a member of the committee for the proposition why those people on parole would be uniformly denied voting rights under the amendment it was answered that this was probably the only way the amendment cleared the Assembly and Senate.

The arguments for and against Proposition 10 will be presented for the information of our readers. To enable all of us to go to the polls armed with the tools we need to vote in our best interests, facts and understanding. Any questions you may have regarding this issue, ask them by all means and they will be answered if answers exist.

This week, we present the pro, next week we will present the con with rebuttal arguments.

THE PRO

Argument in favor of Proposition 10.

JULIAN DIXON

Voting - 'A Fundamental Right'

The right to vote is the essence of a democratic society and any restrictions on that right strike at the heart of representative government. Historically, voting has long been considered "a fundamental right" diligently sought by those excluded from its exercise. Indeed, our Declaration of Independence repeatedly condemns oppression of the right to vote. Restricted exercise of "a fundamental right," when the need for restriction no longer exists, is unfair and abusive.

Historical Need to Restrict Right to Vote is Gone

Historically, exclusion of ex-felons from voting was based on a need to prevent election fraud and protect the integrity of the elective process. The need to use this voter exclusion no longer exists. As a unanimous California Supreme Court recently pointed out, in the Ramirez case, modern statutes regulate the voting process in detail. Voting machines and other safeguards, combined with a variety of criminal penalties, effectively prevent election fruad. Permanent loss of the right to vote is not necessary to achieve this goal!

Debt to Society Fully Paid - Continued Punishment Unfair

An ex-felon returned to society and released from parole has fully paid the price society has demanded. A basic sense of justice demands that a person not be punished repeatedly, for a lifetime, by denying the right to vote.

Deters Reintegration Into Society

The objective of reintegrating ex-felons into society is dramatically impeded by continued restriction of the right to vote. This restriction is a lifelong reminder of second class citizenship -- inferiority -- often because of one mistake committed years earlier. The daily lives of all citizens are deeply affected and changed by the decisions of government. Full citizen participation in these decisions should be encouraged, not prevented. This participation -- electing responsive officials, voting in local school board elections on issues directly affecting the education of our children, expressing views on statewide issues of major significance -- all this is precluded by this unnecessary restriction. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and The Administration of Justice and the President's Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, have strongly endorsed full voting rights for ex-felons. A majority of states, including four that have restored the right since 1972, allow ex-felons to vote. So should we. Let us eliminate this needless restriction.

State Bond Act Provides Funds...

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this area allow for facilities for picnicking, equestrian and hiking trails, nature study and enjoyment of the panoramic view from the ridge tops within the proposed park.

Dixon added that the proposed park site would be immediately adjacent to West Los Angeles College and Jefferson Boulevard on the west side, La Brea Avenue on the east side, and Stocker and Slauson Avenue on the south end.

"I feel that if this proposal is accepted it provides the state with the unique opportunity to practice environmental preservation and conservation in an urban area," Dixon said. "Parks such as the Baldwin Hills proposal could provide services to literally hundreds and thousands of people."

Assembly Committee Passes Farm Labor Bill

A major farm labor bill backed by Cesar Chavez was narrowly approved this week by the Assembly Ways and Means Committee despite opposition by the Teamsters Union and the growers.

With one vote to spare, the bill advanced to the assembly floor on a 12-6 bipartisan vote. It was the farthest a farm labor bill has progressed in the legislature in recent California history.

The bill provides secret union elections for farm workers and permits secondary boycotts, a chief weapon of Chavez' United Farm Workers union.

About 400 Chavez supporters in the audience cheered when the vote was announced, but there were no boistrous demonstrations, which marked an earlier hearing.

The bill by Assemblyman Richard Alatorre, D-Los Angeles, holds out hope to the UFW to regain its power over California farm laborers which has eroded during its bitter rivalry with the Tramsters union.

Teamster representative Gerald O'Hara said the bill was not a compromise between Teamster and UFW positions and predicted it would not be signed by Gov. Reagan.

But Alatorre said the measure had a good chance of passage by the legilature and added Reagan will sign it if he really wants secret ballot elections for farm workers.